Airelle Besson

Trumpeter, composer, arranger and conductor, Airelle Besson has made a name for herself on the European jazz scene with her clear and powerful playing. Virtuoso but never demonstrative, her sound centres on emotion and musicality. Trained classically and in the field of jazz, her major influences are J. S. Bach and Keith Jarrett. In 2015, she won the Django-Reinhardt Académie du Jazz award as "Musician of the Year" and in the same year the Victoires du Jazz in the category "French Instrumental Revelation of the Year". In 2026, Airelle was awarded the Victoire du Jazz as "Instrumentalist of the Year".

A much sought-after side-woman, Airelle Besson is also a leader and an established composer. Born in Paris, her passion for the trumpet started at the age of four, and she began playing when she was seven. She also learnt the violin, studying it in Oxford (UK) when she was nine. For three years she followed double schooling in France and England. At the Sorbonne University, she studied musicology before entering the prestigious Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, from which she graduated with the first prize in jazz in 2002.

Her musical life thrives on encounters and adventures. In 2014, Airelle Besson transformed her longstanding friendship and collaboration with guitarist Nelson Veras into a poetic, acoustic duo in the album Prélude (Naïve Records). The album was a huge success and continues to captivate listeners. The two musicians toured the international scene for several years.

In 2014, she created her own quartet with Isabel Sörling (voice), Benjamin Moussay (keyboards) and Fabrice Moreau (drums). Widely acclaimed by both the press and the public, their first album (Radio One, Naïve) is a tour de force in equilibrium and lucidity. All the melodic power of her compositions, as well as her talent for harmonization, are elegantly displayed. Their second album, TRY!, released in 2021, was a huge success and received numerous accolades from the critics. The Quartet, now joined by Belgian singer Lynn Cassiers, continues to perform in France and internationally.

Together with pianist Sebastian Sternal and drummer Jonas Burgwinkel, whom she met whilst on tour in Germany in 2013, she explores a different kind of dialogue – one based on freedom and playfulness. Their album Surprise!, released in 2024, reflects their chemistry, in which the ability to listen and a taste for the unexpected take the lead.

In January 2026, the album Blossom was released, a duo with accordionist Lionel Suarez, her long-standing collaborator: a pairing of two musical spirits, blends lyricism, delicacy and freedom. They are currently playing a series of sold-out concerts.

Alongside this, Airelle devotes herself to composing and arranging. In 2014, the English group Metronomy approached her for an arrangement on their album, Love Letters. Airelle also composes and arranges for National symphony orchestras.

Currently, she is artist-in-residence at the Théâtre-Sénart / Scène nationale de Lieusaint, and at La Coursive / Scène nationale de La Rochelle. She values these long-term partnerships, which provide a fertile ground for creativity and for engaging with audiences. She has been artist-in-residence in different places over the past twelve years.

As well as her concert performances, Airelle is actively involved in teaching in conservatories in Paris. She also conducts symphonic orchestras in "jazz style".

Throughout her career, Airelle Besson has been a valued member of various groups led by prestigious artists, notably in Charlie Haden and Carla Bley's Liberation Music Orchestra in 2006. She has shared the stage with Michel Portal, Youn Sun Nah, Manu Katché, Joe Lovano, Rhoda Scott, Daniel Humair, Gregory Porter, Baptiste Trotignon, Henri Texier, Tom Harrell, José James and Camélia Jordana, amongst others…

She was appointed a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2022 and became a full member of the SACEM in 2025.

For over a decade, Airelle has been sponsored by BNP Paribas Foundation.